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SUBJECT: ANTI-TIP NGO A.M.B.A.R. - FINAL REPORT

REF: 06 CARACAS 02162

Classified By: ACTING POLITICAL COUNSELOR MELISSA G. RHODES  
FOR REASON 1.4 (D)

¶1. (SBU) Poloff visited the local anti-trafficking NGO Women's Association for Well-Being and Reciprocal Assistance (A.M.B.A.R.) May 18, a recipient of an Economic Support Fund (ESF) Grant approved by the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (G/TIP), to receive the organization's final progress and financial reports. A.M.B.A.R. used the ESF grant to implement a project entitled "A House and a Home," which provides psychological, medical, legal, educational, and professional development services to victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation. With this funding, A.M.B.A.R. assisted 113 victims, 12 of which were identified as trafficking victims. Additionally, the full-time legal assistant the NGO hired with some of the grant money led to increased cooperation with local authorities. Below, Post outlines A.M.B.A.R.'s accomplishments and lessons learned, as well as observations made during the final site visit.

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Taking Stock: "A House and a Home"  
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¶2. (SBU) A.M.B.A.R.'s "A House and a Home" proposal had four stated objectives: provide psychological and legal assistance to victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation; promote healthy reinsertion into society and families (whenever possible); provide professional development opportunities for beneficiaries; and construct a mother-child recreation center. Based on Poloffs' regular visits to the facility, meetings with the director and administrative team, and the organization's final progress and financial reports, Post concludes A.M.B.A.R. has successfully met (and surpassed) its stated objectives.

¶3. (SBU) Regarding psychological and legal assistance, A.M.B.A.R. used part of the USD 129,375 grant to contract and provide office space for one on-site psychologist and one on-site legal assistant. The psychologist provided one-on-one consultations and group therapy sessions. The legal assistant served as a liaison between legal authorities and the NGO, advised victims on their rights, and provided assistance during hearings. Of the 113 victims assisted, 110 received psychological services and 112 received legal assistance.

¶4. (SBU) In order to promote healthy reinsertion back into society and families, beneficiaries participated in workshops that addressed topics, such as anger management, sexual and reproductive health, and human rights. To encourage family reunification, family members were invited to participate in group discussions. A.M.B.A.R. also provided professional development opportunities for beneficiaries, including basic computer skills and classes in ceramics painting,

cosmetology, and jewelry making. Separately, the mother-child center provided a much-needed recreational space for beneficiaries and their dependents.

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Profile of Trafficking Victims Assisted  
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¶5. (SBU) Twelve of the 113 victims A.M.B.A.R. assisted were identified as trafficking victims. A.M.B.A.R.'s director, Nury Pernia, outlined the demographics of this group: all were Venezuelan nationals between the ages of 9 and 17; all were females, except one; the majority of the female victims had dependents; most were trafficked from the interior of the country and recruited under false pretenses of employment in Caracas; and, all were forced into prostitution or involuntary servitude. Pernia noted that this group was unique in that all the victims were Venezuelan. In the past, A.M.B.A.R. has provided services to victims from Colombia and other Caribbean nations.

¶6. (SBU) When asked how trafficking victims learned of A.M.B.A.R.'s services, Pernia highlighted the NGO's public awareness campaign, their after-hours outreach programs, posters in lower class Caracas neighborhoods, the BRV's anti-trafficking 24-hour hotline, and word-of-mouth. (Note: Although the government-operated hotline regularly refers trafficking victims to A.M.B.A.R., the BRV does not fund the NGO's programs).

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Site Visit  
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¶7. (SBU) Poloff toured "A House and a Home's" facilities, and met with A.M.B.A.R.'s administrative team and several beneficiaries May 18. During the visit, Pernia delivered detailed final progress and financial reports (available upon request). The reports include biographical information on the 113 beneficiaries, an internal audit of the objectives completed, and receipts for contracted services. Poloff visited the new consultation room where the psychologist receives patients, and discussed the difficulties of working with BRV officials on anti-trafficking issues with the legal assistant. Poloff participated in a belated Mother's Day gathering for A.M.B.A.R. beneficiaries and spoke to them about their personal experiences, the training opportunities A.M.B.A.R. offered, and their plans for the future. Poloff also toured A.M.B.A.R.'s facilities, including its learning center and the mother-child recreation space. Pernia noted that the NGO provides day care services and pre-school instruction for dependents while beneficiaries complete their development training. Additionally, A.M.B.A.R. provides meals five days a week to over 100 dependents.

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Lessons Learned  
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¶8. (C) While the BRV's cooperation with A.M.B.A.R. on anti-trafficking issues is not fluid, Pernia acknowledges that hiring a full-time legal assistant has led to a noticeable increase in cooperation with local police authorities and lower-level officials in the Ministry of Popular Power for Interior and Justice. Pernia, however, laments that the two roundtable discussions held to draft a national plan of action in 2006 have yet to bear fruit. She (correctly) argues that it will be difficult to regain momentum for the project, as passing anti-trafficking legislation is not one of the BRV's top priorities.

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Comment  
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¶9. (C) A.M.B.A.R. is a well-respected NGO and one of the few local organizations in Venezuela that addresses trafficking-related issues. The ESF grant allowed A.M.B.A.R.

to continue providing greatly-needed medical, legal, and professional development services to victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation. Throughout the funding period, the Embassy and A.M.B.A.R. enjoyed a positive working relationship. Pernia is a former IV Program participant and she openly acknowledged USG funding of "A House and A Home," regardless of the criticism it garnered from the BRV. Moreover, the organization welcomed our regular visits and maintained detailed accounting records. A.M.B.A.R. is currently seeking funding opportunities from other international donors, and welcomes the opportunity to work with the Embassy in the near future.

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